

Message Text

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ACTION EA-09

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R 110009Z SEP 75

FM AMEMBASSY CANBERRA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6532

INFO AMEMBASSY LISBON

AMEMBASSY JAKARTA

C O N F I D E N T I A L CANBERRA 6046

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PT, AS, US, PFOR

SUBJECT: SITUATION IN PORTUGUESE TIMOR

1. SUMMARY: THE FOLLOWING ARE THE VIEWS OF MICHAEL DARBY, PRIVATE AUSTRALIAN CITIZEN, WHO VISITED EAST TIMOR SEPT 1 THROUGH 6. END SUMMARY

2. MICHAEL DARBY, AUSTRALIAN PROFESSIONAL ANTI-COMMUNIST, PROMOTER AND HUMANITARIAN, VISITED PORTUGUESE TIMOR WEEK OF SEPT 1 THROUGH 6 WITH TEAM OF PRIVATE AUSTRALIAN VOLUNTEERS TO ASSIST TIMORESE BY PROVIDING FOOD, MEDICAL SUPPLIES AND MEDICAL ASSISTANCE.

3. DARBY TOLD EMBOFF THAT THE REVOLUTION IN TIMOR WAS NOT COMMUNIST ORIENTED OR CONTROLLED AND THAT VAST MAJORITY OF FRETILIN SUPPORTERS COULDN'T TELL KARL MARX FROM HARPO MARX. HE SAID THAT FRETILIN WAS THE ONLY POLITICAL FORCE IN TIMOR. UDT SUPPORTERS HAD FLED; APODETI NEVER HAD ANY SUPPORT. IN HIS VIEW PORTUGUESE OFFER TO NEGOTIATE WITH FRETILIN MAKES SENSE SINCE FRETILIN ENJOYED IMMENSE POPULAR SUPPORT. TO BUTTRESS
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HIS ARGUMENT THAT FRETILIN IS NON-COMMUNIST, DARBY STATED

THAT REPUBLIC OF CHINA CONSUL IN DILI GOES EVERYWHERE IN OFFICIAL CAR FLYING ROC FLAG, FRETRELIN IS ENCOURAGING CHINESE MERCHANTS TO REOPEN SHOPS, AND MONEY IN BANKS HAS NOT BEEN TOUCHED. ALL IN ALL, FRETRELIN LEADERS APPEARED TO BE A NAIVE BUNCH WHO WERE INTERESTED ONLY IN INDEPENDENCE.

4. DARBY CLAIMED THAT AN INDONESIAN MILITARY INTERVENTION IN TIMOR WOULD BE A DISASTER. FRETRELIN HAS ABOUT 5,000 ARMED SUPPORTERS AND GIVEN THE TERRAIN IN EAST TIMOR AND FRETRELIN'S MASSIVE POPULAR SUPPORT THE INDONESIANS COULD BE TIED DOWN INDEFINITELY. A CONFLICT WOULD IN HIS VIEW BE LONG, NASTY, AND INCONCLUSIVE.

5. DARBY CONCLUDED HIS CONVERSATION BY ASKING FOR USG FINANCIAL SUPPORT FOR HIS HUMANITARIAN EFFORTS IN EAST TIMOR. EMBOFF SAID THIS WAS OUT OF THE QUESTION.

6. COMMENT: DARBY IS AN INTELLIGENT MAN WHO MOUNTED A PRIVATE CAMPAIGN EARLY THIS YEAR WHICH PAID FOR SENDING PRIVATE AUSTRALIAN MEDICAL TEAMS TO GUAM TO ASSIST VIETNAMESE REFUGEES. HE IS A VOCAL ANTI-COMMUNIST AND AN UNABASHED PUBLICITY HOUND WHO ONCE RAN AS A LIBERAL CANDIDATE AGAINST PRIME MINISTER WHITLAM. WHILE DARBY'S PUBLICITY STUNTS AND MEDIA CAMPAIGNS AGAINST THE LABOR GOVERNMENT ARE MORE REMINISCENT OF MIKE TODD OR BILLY ROSE THAN OF A SERIOUS POLITICAL ANALYST WE ARE PASSING ON HIS VIEWS ON TIMOR SINCE HE WAS AT LEAST AN ON THE SPOT OBSERVER AND IS AS WELL A VIOLENT ANTI-COMMUNIST. END COMMENT.
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